

## Here with Me by MoonlightPath666

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**Summary:** It's been almost a year since the events of season 1. Everyone thinks that El died that night, Mike is still struggling with the aftermath and so is everyone else, but everyone is trying their hardest to get back to normal. However, the nightmare isn't over yet. Secrets are being kept. New threats and old threats are rising. Is it time for El to come back home?

# 1. Chapter 1

I have no idea where I'm going with this story and I'm also not the best writer, but I love this show and the wait for season 2 is killing me so I decided to do this. Please leave positive comments if you can and tell me to keep going because it takes me forever to write.

Also, I'm putting a lot of flashbacks on this chapter so that we can get right to the story later on. However, there might be more flashbacks eventually so I'm sorry if you aren't into them.

Oh and this will eventually be Mileven but it's gonna be a slow burn so I'm just warning you and this story will foremost focus on friendship/family than romance.

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Hopper stands outside the door to the dingy motel he's been renting for the last two weeks under a fake name and paid in cash. Enough to make sure the owner doesn't ask questions. He makes sure she never stays too long in one place.

He knocks 3 times and waits 5 seconds. Then he knocks twice. Waits 7 seconds and knocks one final time.

It's their code.

At least for now.

The door opens slowly and big brown eyes stare up at him.

Hopper is always relieved to see her safe and sound every time. He feels lighter somehow.

Sure he's still a piece of shit. But he's a piece of shit that's keeping her alive.

El gives him a smile. She's wearing a light yellow shirt and dark denim jeans. Hopper picked them out himself at a mall outside of town.

Which was a whole ordeal on its own.

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The first time he brought her some clothes was after he got them out of Hawkins.

She was still wearing that pink dress, it was torn and filthy and bloody.

Hopper had taken one look at her and known what he needed to do next.

So he had bought her a basic assortment of clothes that he thought she would need.

She had taken one look at them and started crying.

Hopper thought he must have screwed up and she hated the ones he picked out, he didn't know what a girl Eleven's age would like, so he just guessed.

But apparently, he did just fine.

"I'll take them back and buy something else." He had said immediately feeling a bit panicked staring at the crying girl.

He almost wanted to hug her but she still looked so fragile.

"No." El had said in that weird way of hers.

"No?" Hopper asked trying to get her to explain.

"I like them. They're pretty." El had said rubbing tears away from her eyes.

Hopper understood then.

He could still remember that room back at Hawkins lab where he found that drawing, it was where they kept her.

It was cold, plain, and sterile.

It wasn't a normal little girls bedroom. Nothing like Sarah's room...

They never made her feel like a real girl, like a real human being with feelings. She was just a test subject to those bastards. She never had normal things growing up.

Hopper felt that old anger creeping on again. He wanted to change everything for her but he couldn't.

He wanted to make things better.

Maybe one day he could.

---

El gives him a tight hug, she's always happy to see him.

Hopper was shocked the first time she had put her arms around him, put the feeling soon passed. And even though he wasn't a hugger, he was the only person she had.

So he always hugged her back.

"Are you okay?" El asks nervously.

Hopper knows what she means,

*Were you followed?*

*Do they know about me?*

*Did they try to hurt you again?*

*Do we need to run?*

*Are they going to hurt you if they find out you've been hiding me?*

"It's fine, El. We're safe here for now."

El bites her lips, a nervous habit that she developed over the last couple months.

"You were gone longer this time." She said, almost accusingly.

Hopper almost wants to laugh.

She's nearly a teenager now and seeing her be a little moodier make him feel like he's doing something right. She's not afraid to be angry at him. She's not afraid of him.

"Sorry, they were keeping their eyes on me. I couldn't get away without looking suspicious. But I'm here now " he reassures her.

He doesn't want to tell her how bad it really is.

He'll pretend everything is fine for now.

"How about we go out for a walk in the park and maybe get some ice cream?" Hopper says in hopes to distract her.

El cheers up immediately.

"Strawberry ice cream?" She asks hopefully.

"Whatever you want," Hopper says.

El smiles and for now, everything is okay.

He wishes he could give her more days like this.

He wishes she didn't have to be stuck in a crappy motel room all the time.

But El says she understands.

Especially after last time. When they almost caught her... El tells him that she still has nightmares about it.

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It was the day after they had their first fight. She had screamed at him, and Hopper had screamed back. He had to remind himself to take a deep breathe and act like the grown up but he was barely hanging on.

It had been a couple months since Hawkins and he had set her up in a small cabin in some random woods outside of town.

She had wanted to go back immediately.

"I want to be with my friends," El had said.

"I told you it's not safe right now, they're looking for you. I don't know how, but they know you're alive,"

El had frowned and tears had filled her eyes.

Hopper was scared she'd start crying again. She cried a lot the first couple months.

But she wasn't scared or sad.

She was pissed.

"You can't make me stay here! You're a traitor! They only found me because you told them where I was!" she had yelled, angry tears streaming down her face.

Hopper finally broke, mostly because she was right and he was tired.

"You listen here, kid. I am risking everything for you! Everything! Do you really think I wanted any of this? I have those assholes breathing down my neck every day. They follow me constantly. They make me do they're dirty work and lie for them! And if they find out about you, everyone could be in danger. Is that what you want!" Hopper had yelled.

He had watched her face become frozen as his voice got louder.

Then she had gotten up from the thin bed she was sitting on and walked towards the corner of the small room.

Away from him.

She curled down on the floor and covered her face with her hands.

She started sobbing.

*Shit*, Hopper had thought.

He didn't know how to make it right anymore.

"Listen El, I'm sorry. I really am, but this is our only option right now.

I'll try to find another way, okay. But for now, this is the only way I can keep you and everyone we know safe," Hopper said trying to make things better, but it was too late.

El didn't look up or stop crying.

Hopper wanted to stay and find something to say to make things better but what could he possibly tell her.

Besides, he also had to get back to Hawkins before they noticed he had left.

So with one last look at El, he left.

He should have stayed.

He came back early morning the next day, having not gotten a lot of sleep because he couldn't stop thinking about El crying all alone in the middle of the woods.

He had brought her breakfast from a small dinner he found on the way there, he made sure to get her waffles as a peace offering.

However, once he got to the cabin, he saw that the front door was wide open.

Which meant something had gone terribly wrong.

They must have found her. But how?

Hopper still didn't know how in the months following. He was sure that they didn't know that he was in contact with her, they would have tortured him for information by now, they would have found her by now.

But no. So far this was their only attack. And they had failed.

Hopper had grabbed his gun and he silently went inside the cabin.

He could hear El. She was whimpering.

*She's alive*, was all Hopper could think.

As Hopper looked around, he saw that everything was in disarray. Things were broken and thrown around the small cabin.

Two dead bodies laid in the middle of the chaos.

El was still sitting down on the spot where Hopper had left her yesterday.

"El? El? It's me, it's okay. I'm here now." Hopper had said once he saw her horrified face.

She couldn't talk, she was so scared.

"El, sweetheart, it's okay your safe now," Hopper said gently.

He put his gun back in its holster and slowly walked closer to her.

She stared at him like a wild animal.

For a moment Hopper thought she was going to kill him too.

But no.

Once Hopper was crouched down in front of her trying to make sure that she wasn't injured, she quickly latched on to him. Her thin arms going around his neck and her face hidden in his chest as she started sobbing.

Hopper held her tightly.

"I'm the monster," she had whispered brokenly.

"No El," Hopper had said, "They are the monsters."

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"We'll kill all of them. Even the kids. Even their parents. And then we'll kill you." They had told him.

"We've done it before and we'll do it again if you give us a reason to. You just have to do as we say."

Hopper had no choice.

---



El was sitting on a swing in the small park he had taken them. She was almost done with her ice cream cone.

He had made sure no one had followed him out of Hawkins. He made sure no cars had followed him from the motel room. Made sure there were no bugs or tracking devices on him. They were safe, and he'd soon start looking for a new place to move her to. He always tried not to keep them outside too long but he hated having to keep her inside, as though she was still trapped in a prison. He tried to give her some sense of freedom in any way he could.

"Did you finish the books I left you?" he asked.

El's eyes lit up.

"Almost, can you bring more please?"

Hopper grinned.

"Sure kid, have you been doing the math lessons I left you too?"

El frowned.

"No...I don't get it," she said sadly.

Hopper wasn't really expecting her to, especially with no one around to help her and teach her. He had quickly learned that she had a small vocabulary, but she knew how to read. So he had started bringing her children's books and had her practice her writing.

Eventually, he bought her a children's dictionary for when she didn't understand what a word meant.

She had improved greatly during the last few months. And he started bringing longer books with more words in them.

It made her happy to escape into different stories and adventures she found in the pages of a book.

However, math was a different story. One that El hated. It was no surprise to Hopper that she only had the basics taught to her in the lab, and it left her struggling with everything else.

"I'll try to stay a couple more hours and help you with math and then you should get ready for bed. Remember to brush your teeth. Be on the look out for any cars or weirdos hanging around. If you feel like something's wrong you call me as soon as you can" he said.

El actually had the nerve to roll her eyes at him.

"You say the same thing every time I see you. Do you think I'll forget?" She said teasingly.

"Watch the sass, young lady. Respect your elders." Hopper told her sternly.

El giggled.

Hopper couldn't help but smile at the sound.

Eventually, the conversation slowed down between them.

They were both quiet creatures.

Happier to sit in silent contemplation, than meaningless chatter.

However, El spoke up as she noticed a group of kids playing football near the playground.

"Hopper?" El asked quietly. Sadly.

"How are they doing?"

Hopper sighed.

"They're safe, if anything happens to them I'd tell you about them. You know that."

El looked at him until he caved and gave her more information. He almost always caved.

"Last time I checked, they were working on the science fair," Hopper told her reluctantly.

El smiled slightly.

"I think they'll win this year," she said thinking of how smart the boys are.

She missed them.

And Mike... She never knew that it was possible to miss someone so much.

"Is he happy?" El asks despite herself.

El's not even sure she really wants to know the answer. She wonders what would hurt the most?

If Hopper said "yes he's happy without you" or "no, he's not happy."

Hopper doesn't need to ask who "he" is.

Hopper knows she thinks about the Wheeler kid all the time. And he doesn't know how much longer he can keep lying to everyone. How many secrets can he keep?

Every time he sees the kids huddled together back at Hawkins, he feels the guilt rush back in.

And that Wheeler kid...

Hopper tries to avoid his face the most.

Is he happy?

Sure, he seems happy sometimes.

But he has circles under his eyes. And he looks so damn pathetic sometimes like he wants to turn back time to happier days.

*He's way too young to look so old,* Hopper thinks.

He looks lost sometimes like somehow he knows that she's close but out of reach.

*He thinks about her all the time too.*

Hopper doesn't need superpowers to know that Mike misses her

terribly.

But he still laughs. He's loved by his family and friends. He sure knows how to put on a brave face and pretend he'll be okay.

Maybe one day they'll both move on.

Or maybe one day Hopper will explode and shake them both until they stop making him feels so miserable.

So he lies.

"Mike is safe and happy. You don't have to worry about any of them."

No, Hopper thinks, *none of us are safe*.

## 2. Chapter 2

I'm making Mike super angsty in this because he thinks that Eleven is dead. Eleven knows that he is safe and sound, therefore I didn't make her too angsty although she did have her fair angst last chapter. This chapter ended up being way too long but here ya go. Don't expect anything longer than this in the future lol

Also, Mike is mad at Max for reasons that aren't Max's fault. I'm not making Max a bad person but she has to earn her way into this group and also this is all from Mike's pov so he's not exactly a fair narrator.

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### Chapter 2

Mike's POV:

Mike woke up the morning before Halloween knowing somehow that it was going to be a crappy day.

But lately, that's just been his daily expectation of life.

He woke up late.

And with a pounding headache.

He had that nightmare again.

*Goodbye Mike...*

*Goodbye Mike...*

*Goodbye Mike...*

It was almost always the same, sometimes it was worse.

He woke up from his nightmare at 3 AM and decided to distract himself by doing some homework he had left last minute.

No matter how worried his mother looked at him nowadays, at least she wouldn't have to worry about his grades.

Besides, Mike found that it was best for him to keep busy, and not let his mind wander.

So he stayed up until he couldn't keep his eyes open any longer and he slept in through his alarm and through his mother's first attempt to wake him. By her third attempt, Mike realized he was going to be late no matter what and accepted it.

He already felt exhausted somehow.

He got up slowly and got ready for the day mechanically.

He skipped breakfast altogether, despite his mother's protest.

"I'm already late, I should really get going," Mike told her trying to get away from her worried frown.

He hated making her worry, she didn't deserve that.

*Shit*, Mike realized, *the guys are going to worry too*.

It felt like he was constantly trying to convince everyone he was okay, trying to convince himself that he was okay.

It was a hard act to keep up but some days were easier than others.

Today was not one of those days.

As he rode his bike to school, he got that feeling again.

Like someone was looking at him.

Mike stopped in front of the school.

There was no one around. Everyone must have already been in class.

He was just being paranoid.

Because every time he looked around there was no one there.

It was just a feeling.

Mike shook it off and tried to ready himself to face the day.

And of course, it was a shit day.

Once he got to his homeroom and took his seat next to Will, the teacher wrote him up for being tardy again and gave him detention after school.

He tried to take a deep breath and let it go.

*So what?* He got detention. It was no big deal, no matter how freaked out the guys looked.

He ignored Will's worried gaze and Lucas's questioning looks.

Surprisingly, Dustin looked more angry than worried, which confused Mike.

Once class was dismissed and they were walking through the hallways to their next class, Mike explained that he had simply overslept, and there was no life-threatening reason for his tardiness.

Thankfully that kept Will's concern at bay.

However, Dustin still looked annoyed.

"Mike, you idiot. You got detention after school. Do you know what that means?" Dustin asked amazed at Mike's forgetfulness.

"Am I supposed to?" asked Mike confused.

"We were supposed to go to the arcade after school and then go back to your house to work on our science fair project," Lucas said.

"Oh...Damn. I'm sorry guys, I completely forgot. We can still work on the science fair tonight though, can't we?" Mike said trying to make things right.

"I guess, but I wanted us to all hang out with Max," Dustin said feeling awkward all of the sudden.

"Oh right..." Mike said remembering that Dustin had invited her.

He was almost glad that he had detention now. Not that he would say it aloud to Dustin and Lucas.

"Well, we can still go while Mike is stuck in this prison and then meet up later at his house," Lucas said being practical.

"I guess..but you better not flake on our project, we only have one week left and we have to win," Dustin told Mike.

"We will," Mike said trying to sound confident.

"Absolutely," Lucas agreed.

"See you at lunch," Will said as Lucas and Dustin walked off to their class.

Mike and Will walked towards another classroom.

"Are you sure you're okay? That's like the third time you've been late," Will said.

Mike felt his guilt rise up as he looked at Will's pale face and the dark circles under his eyes.

Mike knew Will still had nightmares too and other problems that he didn't like to talk about.

It almost made him feel better that Will was still struggling from last year, and Mike hated himself for feeling that way.

But somehow it made him feel less alone to know that he wasn't the only one that couldn't move on.

That he wasn't the only one still hurting.

He felt the same way when he looked at Nancy.

It was a depressing sort of connection, but it was an unbreakable one.

Which is why Mike let himself be honest with Will.



"It's fine, I just had another nightmare," Mike said trying not to sound too freaked out.

He didn't want to worry him. Will had enough to deal with, he didn't need to deal with Mike's problems too.

"Do you want to talk about it?" asked Will awkwardly.

They both knew what "it" meant.

Who "it" was.

But Mike couldn't.

He would fall apart.

*She's gone.*

*Gone.*

*Gone.*

Mike shook his head and Will understood.

He always did and for that Mike was grateful.

So they walked together to their next class in a comfortable silence.

---

Throughout the day Mike managed to actually pay attention in class and he started to feel a little better by lunch time.

But of course, that didn't last long.

He was walking towards the table they always sat at.

The rest of the guys weren't there yet. They had decided to go ask Mr. Clarke some questions regarding the science fair project and Mike didn't have the energy to go along with them.

Max wasn't anywhere in sight either and Mike hoped that maybe she wouldn't show up at all.

Maybe it would be a good day after all.

Unfortunately, Mike didn't notice that he was walking past Troy's table.

Not until he tripped over Troy's leg, which he had stuck right in front of him.

Mike fell forwards, his knees hitting the cafeteria floor with a painful thud, he had caught himself on his hands which also hurt from the impact.

The lunch tray he had been carrying crashed to the floor.

Yet somehow in the downfall, he had managed to get mashed potatoes and gravy all over himself.

The whole cafeteria was silent as they watched the humiliating scene.

"You should watch where you're going loser," Troy gloated.

Troy had left him alone for a couple months after his arm got broken, however now that time had passed and his fear had faded, Troy had returned to his old ways with even more intent on hurting Mike and his friends.

Troy's idiotic friends started laughing making the rest of the cafeteria laugh too.

Mike felt humiliated.

*I hate you, thought Mike, I hate all of you.*

Mike knew he didn't really mean it but in that moment he wished Troy's arm was still broken.

"You know what Troy? Acting like a dick won't make yours any bigger," said a girl's voice behind Mike.

It was Max.

The rest of the kids, even Troy's friends started laughing again.

This time at Troy whose face turned a bright red.

Troy stood up and for a moment Mike saw a trace of fear in Max's eyes.

But it was gone as soon as it appeared.

"So you need another girl to fight your battles for you Frog face? You sure are pathetic." Troy said scathingly at Mike who was still on the floor.

Mike felt his throat tighten.

He felt his hands shake in anger.

*How dare he?*

"What's going on here?" asked the lunch monitor who had finally noticed there was something happening.

"Nothing. Wheeler just had an accident," Troy said innocently.

The lunch monitor looked at the mess Mike had made and she had the audacity to glare at him.

"Is this true?" she asked him.

Mike wanted to scream.

But he knew that there was no point.

Even if he told someone Troy was bothering him, it would only anger Troy more.

"Yes, that's right. I tripped," Mike told her stonily.

"You sure?" she asked again.

"I'm sure."

That seemed good enough for the monitor and she left.

The lunch room went back to their normal chatter.

Max had walked closer to him and reached out a hand to help him stand up.

Mike glared at her outstretched hand and ignored it.

He stood up on his own with shaky knees and grabbed his fallen tray.

Troy sat back down on his table and smirked at Mike while his friends laughed.

"What's your damage, Mike?" Max spit out at him.

"I don't need your help," Mike said angrily.

"Fine, next time I'll let you get your ass kicked," Max said sounding almost hurt but mostly pissed off.

Then she stormed off.

Mike was left standing there with gravy and mashed potatoes all over him, listening to Troy's laughter.

He wanted to disappear.

He quickly threw away his mostly empty tray and dashed towards the bathroom.

Once he got there he tried to calm himself down.

He knew he shouldn't have gotten so angry.

He knew that he was going to regret being such a douchebag to Max later.

He knew that he shouldn't let Troy and his baboons get to him.

But he mentioned her.

He mentioned El.

"Another girl" that's what Troy had said.

And Mike could have punched him right there if the lunch monitor

hadn't interfered.

*How dare he?*

*How dare he mentioned her.*

But no, Troy didn't know.

El would never be just "another girl" to Mike.

That wasn't possible.

Mike took a deep breath.

It felt like his insides were burning up.

He looked at his thin frame in the bathroom mirror.

Damn, he did look pathetic.

Ugly stains all over his shirt, red blotches on his cheeks, dark circles under his eyes, messy hair because he didn't bother to comb it that morning.

And his eyes...His eyes looked so damn sad.

*This isn't me.*

*This isn't me.*

*This is just what's left of me.*

What if he never gets better? What he never feels better?

Just sad and angry and bitter.

Forever.

It's been months.

Almost a year now since she's been gone.

Since she died...

*It should have never happened.*

*She didn't deserve that.*

*I should have protected her.*

Everyone said he just needed time.

That it would all get easier eventually.

That's what his friends and family kept telling both him and Nancy after everything that happened last year.

Mike thinks of Chief Hopper.

Despite his nervousness, Mike had asked him about it after everything had settled down.

"Do you still think of her? Eleven?" Mike had asked.

Chief Hopper had stayed silent for a long time and Mike had been worried that he'd done something wrong.

Eventually, he answered.

"Yes. Every single day." Hopper had said quietly.

And he spoke no more about it.

Mike took another deep breath.

He needed to go class eventually, then go to detention afterward.

And then he would go back to the safety of his home and his friends and he would put this ugly day behind him.

*It's just a bad day.*

*Tomorrow will be better.*

At least that's Mike's only hope.

Besides tomorrow's Halloween and he's going to spend all day with

his friends and go trick or treating with them later.

Mike just needs to get through today without another breakdown.

He hides out in the library until lunch is over and goes to his next few classes on autopilot.

The only thing he has to worry about is his last class period.

Which is Art class.

Mike would have been okay in this class if it wasn't for the fact that Max and Will had it as well.

Mike was dreading having to talk about what happened at lunch.

There was no doubt that his friends had already found out about the incident by now.

Mike didn't want them to see him look as pathetic as he felt.

And he didn't want to deal with Max.

He walks into class despite his unease and sits down next to Will who looks like he did that morning.

Worried once more.

And it's all Mike's fault.

"You okay? Max told us what Troy did. He's such a jerk, Mike. I'm sorry we weren't there. When we all found out, Dustin had to stop Lucas from going up to Troy and doing something stupid," said Will.

Mike almost smiles at that. He could imagine the scene in his head.

He really didn't deserve his friends sometimes.

"I'm okay now, it's no big deal. Honest," Mike said trying to accept his own words as the truth.

Will gives him a look. They both know he's lying.

Before Will can say something else, a red head comes storming into the room and sits down on the empty seat next to Will.

Mike suppresses a groan.

He should apologize. It's the right thing to do.

"Hello, Will," Max says pointedly ignoring Mike.

On the other hand, Mike didn't want to say a damn thing to her.

So he doesn't and she's happy to ignore him throughout class and talk to Will only.

In the beginning, Mike tried. He really did.

He tried to be nice and friendly when Dustin first became friends with her in the beginning of the school year.

Sure she was rude and brutally honest at times. And she had a quick temper that sometimes left casualties but she was new in town and she didn't treat the boys like they were trash or weirdos. So Mike figured that she must be good at heart and rough around the edges.

Until Mike figured out why Lucas and Dustin were so accepting of her.

They had both somehow fallen for her. Fallen hard.

It was funny at first, Mike will admit.

They way they would both be nervous and horribly awkward around her.

Mike and Will would look at each other and laugh at them.

However, it soon stopped being funny.

The more they hung out, the more it became clear that she did not return either of their feelings.

It was obvious to see. She thought it was funny to see Dustin and Lucas become fools in front of her and Mike was not okay with that.



He had to protect them. Didn't they see that she was using them for her enjoyment?

Didn't they see that she was going to break their hearts?

But no they didn't.

And Mike tried to ignore it. But it was obvious to everyone that Mike didn't want her around.

But of course no one talked about it and Dustin and Lucas kept inviting her to hang out with them.

And Mike and Max never got along.

And after today, Mike was glad that he wouldn't have to be with them at the arcade.

"Hello, Max," said Will awkwardly. He could sense the tension between Max and Mike but he didn't dare bring it up.

He was not one for confrontation.

So he and Max discussed their plans for the arcade later and Will talked to Mike about their plans for the science fair.

It's a balancing act to be friends with two people who can't stand each other but Will is an amazing friend.

And art class always puts him in a good mood, which Mike is thankful for.

The class soon comes to an end and it's time for Will and Max to leave and find the others.

"I'll see you at your place tonight," Will says as he leaves with the red head.

Mike walks towards detention feeling more alone than ever.

He does his time and manages to knock out that day's homework so it wasn't a terrible waste of time.

He walks out of school and thinks about taking a nap when he gets home.

If he felt exhausted this morning, he feels absolutely brain dead by now.

He grabs his bike and slowly peddles away.

He just wants to get to his bed and sleep this day away.

He doesn't even notice that he's being followed.

Not until he feels a hand grab the collar of his shirt and shove him off his bike.

He crashes to the ground for the second time that day.

This time he hits his head.

It takes him a minute to focus on who his attacker is.

Or attackers.

He hears them laugh at first.

Cruel and sadistic.

It was Troy and two of his goons.

Mike tries to stand up so that he can run away. It's the only hope he has to get away from them. But one of Troy's idiot friends kicks him on the side and Mike crashes down again in pain.

Despite Mike's fear, he can't help but open his mouth.

"Really Troy, you need help to beat me up? Are you really that useless or are you just a coward?"

That earns Mike a punch to his face.

He feels blood trickle down his nose.

He should shut up and curl into a ball until it's over.

Maybe beg Troy to let him go.

But Mike has nothing left to lose.

All he has is that anger he felt earlier.

This destructive feeling that keeps growing inside him.

"I'm not the one that used a little bald weirdo last year to protect him," Troy taunts him.

Something breaks in Mike.

He lunges at Troy and manages to land a punch strong enough that Troy almost gets knocked down.

Mike's hand throbs in pain.

The other two goons immediately grab a hold of Mike.

He starts to feel panicked as he struggles to get away from them, but he's powerless now.

Troy looks at him with a new found fury in his eyes and a new bloody lip courtesy of Mike.

"She's not here to protect you anymore. She must have realized what a loser you were and ran away. She was a freak anyways," Troy says as he wipes blood away from his mouth.

"Just like you."

Somehow Troy's words feel more hurtful than his punch.

"You're gonna pay for this Wheeler and no one's going to come to your rescue now."

---

Mike lays on the ground for a minute trying to catch his breath after Troy and the rest finally left him.

They had thrown him around and punched him and kicked him until they got bored of seeing him in pain.

He gets up slowly, his whole body in pain.

Thankfully Troy was smart enough to not hit him in the face too much.

He just got a bloody lip and bruised nose.

But they had no trouble kicking and punching the rest of him.

Mike could just make the excuse to his Mom that he had fallen down and hopefully, she would believe him.

He rode his bike slowly and shakily towards his house.

Thankfully once he got there, he remembered that his mother had gone to a book club so he wouldn't have to face her yet.

However as he walked through his front door, he saw a very worried Nancy.

"Where have you been? The school called to say that you got detention. You are so lucky that I was here to answer that call and not Mom. I decided to wait for you to get home since Mom isn't here but then you kept taking forever, and I know that detention doesn't take so long... Oh God, what happened to your face?" Nancy asked, her eyes widening at the sight of blood.

"It's nothing! I just had an accident," Mike said feeling caught off guard.

"An accident! Mike, I'm not an idiot! Who did that to you?" Nancy asked angrily.

"No one," Mike said feeling embarrassed.

"Mike, we promised we wouldn't lie to each other. Now tell me who!" Nancy exclaimed.

"Fine... It was just some morons from school okay. It's not as bad as it looks. I'm fine," Mike said ignoring the burning pain all over his body.

Nancy looked at him for a moment, weighing the worth of his words.

Then she hurried towards the front door and grabbed her coat from the coat hanger.

"Where are you going?" Mike asked confused at her determined expression.

"I'm going to find those idiots and teach them a lesson," Nancy said haughtily.

"What? No way!" Mike yelled grabbing her arm and stopping her from going out the door.

"Are you insane?" Mike asked.

"No. I'm not insane. They have no right to hurt you, Mike!"

"Nancy, please don't do this. Do you know how embarrassing this will be? I've already been humiliated today, I can't take any more," Mike said desperately.

Nancy sighs heavily, but she starts to retreat from the door.

Mike feels relieved.

"Fine, I won't do anything this time but if they mess with you again they'll regret," threatened Nancy.

Mike felt touched by her anger.

It was weird at first, to have Nancy be so protective of him. But after last year, Nancy seemed prepared for any disaster and she was terrified of losing anyone she loved ever again. Eventually, Mike grew used to Nancy's protectiveness of him and he also grew to kind of love it. Not that he would ever tell her that. But it felt nice to have his sister interested in him again. She would even go out with him and his friends sometimes, especially when Jonathan tagged along. And she would even take him to go see movies or to the comic book store.

Mike hadn't realized how much he had missed having her on his side.

"Let me at least clean you up a little," Nancy said feeling useless.

"Okay...and please don't tell Mom about detention," Mike asked feeling desperate once more.

Nancy chuckled.

"No problem, kid."

"Thank you, Nancy," Mike said feeling grateful to have a sister like her.

Nancy ruffled his hair.

"You'd be lost without me," she teased.

"Yeah right," Mike retorted but secretly he agreed with her.

### 3. Chapter 3

#### Chapter 3

El's pov:

It was October 31'st.

That's what the little calendar next to her bed said.

She had spent multiple days going through each month.

Memorizing the names of each month and how many days each one had and what holidays each one had.

She had to ask Hopper about those because she didn't know what any of them meant.

"They are days when you celebrate different things and spend times with your loved ones. But really it's just days that people use to eat lots of food, buy things they don't need and not go to work."

"So it's a good thing," El had asked still feeling a little confused.

"I guess you could say that," Hopper had said.

El had a feeling that Hopper didn't particularly like those days.

She wondered if he had anyone that he could share those days with.

She had a feeling that he was like her.

Alone.

"Halloween isn't really a family holiday thought. I mean it could be, but it's really a time for kids to do stupid things with their friends and eat candy until their teeth rot."

"What stupid things?" El had asked feeling even more confused but also curious.

"Well, it's a time when people like to dress up as other things, such as

characters, or monsters, or other people and they go from house to house asking for candy. It's called Trick or Treating."

"But why would people not want to be themselves?" asked El.

"I have no idea, I guess it's considered fun,"

El still felt perplexed by this strange day.

And it also made her feel sad.

Because she wasn't with her friends.

She felt okay when Hopper was with her. Safe, almost like being in Mike's basement made her feel.

But when he's gone she feels the sadness rush back.

She knew they were probably out there. Dressed as something else, eating candy, and laughing with each other.

And El was alone.

And she was bored.

It wasn't a new feeling. She was used to being bored in the lab. Used to spending days locked inside a room with no human contact.

However, now to keep herself distracted she would sometimes use her powers.

She knew she shouldn't but she couldn't help it.

Back at the lab, it was scary for her to use her powers, there were always people watching her, their eyes cold and calculating. So she never really used them unless they forced her to.

It was different when she used them only for herself.

They were a part of her.

She understood that now.



After she killed the Demogorgon, she remembers feeling so weak.

So powerless.

She had completely drained herself.

She couldn't even lift a napkin afterward.

She felt so empty and feared that her powers had left her forever.

But eventually, they came back to her.

It took her a good couple months of rest but her powers had come back. El even felt as though they were stronger than before or maybe it was that she had finally accepted them and therefore she could control them better.

She lifts the small calendar with ease and makes the 12 pages flicker.

She does it over and over again.

Watching all the days go by.

All these days without her friends.

She wanted to go back in time somehow. Back to them.

But she didn't need to ask Hopper, to know that it was impossible to go back in time.

Eventually, she grew tired of lifting random objects.

She considers turning on the small TV that's in her room.

She mostly watches the morning news and maybe some cartoons in the afternoon. But other than that El would rather read or be with Hopper. However, Hopper wasn't here so she turns it on anyways, just to have some background noise.

Hopper had told her the day before that he was probably going to be working all night.

"Halloween is also a time for people to get into trouble and I have to

end up cleaning up their mess" Hopper had told her.

"What kind of trouble?" El had asked.

"Some people get drunk and rowdy and they do stupid things...but I probably shouldn't be telling you these things," Hopper sighed and that was the end of that conversation.

It was getting late and it would be dark out soon. El didn't like the dark.

She focuses on fixing the small broken down TV reception. Most of the time it was horribly blurry, but El learned how to fix the connection by using her powers.

She can't help but think that her father would be proud of her and the thought makes her feel sick.

So instead, she starts to think about what she should eat for dinner, even though her appetite had left her.

She can't cook anything in this motel room, and she can't go outside without Hopper. Most of the time Hopper brings her meals that he cooks himself which El surprisingly enjoys or he buys her something from a restaurant or diner and brings it to her. On nights when he can't see her El has to get creative.

Hopper makes sure that she has snacks available at all times. He brings her granola bars, cereal, muffins and lots of fruit. Any kind of food that doesn't require cooking, Hopper keeps in stock. He makes sure she always has water and even brings her juice and soda, but El doesn't really like the bubbly drinks and Hopper learns that she loves apple juice the most. He even brings her sweet things like Twinkies, and cookies and chocolate bars. Hopper warns her not to have too many of the sweet things and Eleven listens...most of the time. But she has a weakness for chocolate, and it makes her think fondly of Dustin.

Overall, El is grateful.

She can still remember sleepless nights at the lab when they would refuse to feed her unless she would do something in return for them.

Nights when her stomach was empty and she felt like she would fade away into nothing.

El knows Hopper would never let that happen.

She sometimes sees herself in the mirror and doesn't recognize herself.

She'd grown taller, maybe a couple inches. Her hair had grown out and El found herself admiring the wavy short locks that would sometimes curl around her head. Her face looks a bit fuller and she knows she had probably gained some weight during her time away from the lab.

She grabs an apple, a granola bar, and the last twinkie she has left. She could probably eat something else but she grabs a book instead and settles in front of the TV.

She stays there for a couple minutes, feeling comfortable as she bit into the red apple and reads her book.

Overall it was a typical night for her and she almost felt safe.

Until the electricity turned off.

The room went dark and silent.

El tried to turn the lights back on with her mind but she couldn't seem to reach what the problem was.

It wasn't the first time that something like that had happened but it was usually storms that made everything shut off.

El felt a touch of panic but she tried to keep calm.

There was no reason to worry.

Except that she hated the dark.

And Hopper wasn't here.

She was all alone.

El's breathing started to speed up and she curled herself into a ball.

"It's okay. It's okay. It's okay." She whispered to herself.

Maybe she would've managed to calm herself eventually, but then someone knocked on her door.

Loudly.

She jumped to her feet, her heart feeling like it was going to jump out of her chest.

Her first thought was that it wasn't Hopper.

He wouldn't have knocked that way. It wasn't their signal.

And besides that, *she could almost feel it*.

It wasn't Hopper.

She reached for the phone near her bedside.

It was dead.

Panic started to bubble in her throat, she wanted to scream.

*What do I do?*

*What do I do?*

Another knock, this time louder, enveloped the room.

El felt like she was underwater and she was about to drown.

For a moment El thought that maybe she was just being paranoid and it was a worker from the motel. Maybe someone was trying to tell her why the electricity had gone out. But that didn't make sense. Hopper had told the owner, well more threatened, that no one should disturb this room while she was here.

Something felt off.

She could feel it in the air somehow.

She got closer to the door.

*She needed to see who it was.*

With shaky legs, she reached for the peephole and looked at who was on the other side.

She nearly screamed again.

Horror ran through her body like an electric shock.

She moved away from the door in fear.

*What is that?*

*It wasn't human. It couldn't be.*

*There was no way...It was a monster.*

*But not like the Demogorgon.*

*No... it must be human.*

El's brain tried to make sense of what she had seen but she couldn't.

At first look, it was an ordinary man standing outside.

But she had seen more.

There was some sort of dark shadow over his entire body, it looked toxic, and his eyes... they were completely black.

Suddenly whatever it was started punching the door.

Over and over again.

He was trying to break it down.

She had to get away from here.

El took a shaky breath and quickly reached for the emergency backpack that Hopper had left under the bed.

She tried to remember what he told her to do in case of emergency but all she could think of was the repeated thumping on the door.

She knew she had to escape.

Hopper always had her check for all exits when they entered some place new and El remembered that there was a window in her bathroom.

A small window, but big enough for her to squeeze through.

And as her body started shaking in fear she ran for the restroom and quickly opened the window.

She threw her backpack first and then she hauled herself out.

She ignored the sound of wood breaking as whatever that thing was started breaking through the front door.

She landed outside with a heavy thud and grabbed the bag.

Then she ran away as fast as she could.

Past the motel. Past streets and cars and houses and people giving her odd looks.

Until she couldn't run any longer and she fell to her knees in exhaustion.

El took deep breaths trying to calm her heart rate.

As she looked at her surroundings she realized that she had somehow ended up in a small neighborhood.

Small pretty houses, decorated with what Hopper called "Halloween decorations" and there were children and people walking around.

They were laughing and smiling, carrying small bags and dressed strangely.

Some adults gave El funny looks that made her panic even more.

She wasn't supposed to be out in public without Hopper.

El felt a tightening in her chest. She wanted to curl into a ball and cry. She wanted someone to be here for her.

*She wanted Mike to be here.*

But that wasn't going to happen.

El was on her own for now.

She took another deep breath and rubbed away the tears that were threatening to fall with her hands.

Then El opened her backpack and looked through what Hopper had put there.

There was money, some food and water, some clothes and there was a map with Hawkins circled on it.

She knew that she had to find him somehow.

Or call him.

That's what Hopper always told her if she got separated from him.

Yes, she will call him and tell him to pick her up from wherever she was.

El just has to wait for him to come and get her.

He wouldn't let anyone hurt her. El trusted him despite everything that had happened last year.

She walked through the houses and strangely dressed people.

Some of them wore masks that scared El even more so she tried her hardest to ignore them.

She just had to find a pay phone, Hopper had taught her how to use one in case of emergencies and she remembered his phone number by heart.

She walked away from the houses and loud people and wandered over to a road.

She kept walking and watched as it got darker and darker until the sun had gone down completely and only stars lit up the dark, night sky.

Finally, she reached a small gas station that had a pay phone outside.

She felt relief wash over her tired and anxious body.

She was going to be okay.

She feeds the weird phone coins and presses Hopper's phone number.

The phone line rings and rings and rings but there's no answer.

*Why isn't he answering?*

She tries again.

But still no answer.

*No. No No. Please no.*

El starts to panic once more and this time she lets herself cry.

She waits a little longer and tries to call again but still no answer.

*He's probably busy tonight. He said that Halloween was a busy night for him, she thinks trying to comfort herself.*

*He probably won't be home anytime soon...or maybe they found him. Maybe the monsters sought him out too or the bad men found out about her and they have him now.*

She has to find him. That's the only option she has left.

She has to go to Hawkins.

El takes out her map and looks at the little dot marked Hawkins.

Her eyes are blurry because of her tears and she's starting to feel cold being outside in the chilly night air.

She grabs a jacket that was in the backpack and puts it on. It has a



hood on it and she uses it to cover as much of herself as she can.

She looks at the street sign that the gas station is in and finds it on the map. Then she traces a route to Hawkins.

It doesn't look like it's too complicated to get to, but now she has to find some sort of transportation to get there.

She has to take the bus.

It's the only option and only way that she won't draw attention to herself.

She knows she can't ask an adult for help because they would just call the police and the last person who called someone was Benny.

No, she needed to do this on her own and not get anyone involved.

She walks towards the bus stop and forces herself to stop crying.

She couldn't fall apart right now.

She knows that she can find her way to Hawkins.

It would take her a couple hours but she knew she could handle it.

For a moment she felt happy, she was going to be in Hawkins again...near her friends.

She'd be the closest to Mike than ever before and just the thought of it made her fears melt away.

She smiled as the bus approached her stop.

*I'm going home.*

---

**Please leave a review or like so that I'll keep writing and not give up on this story.**

## 4. Chapter 4

Thanks so much for the likes and reviews. I really appreciate the support.

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### Chapter 4

Mike's POV:

*They were at the Snowball.*

*A slow song was playing in the background.*

*But Mike wasn't focusing on the nameless melody.*

*No, he was focused on the girl he was dancing with.*

*He was dancing with El.*

*"I can't believe you're really here," Mike said softly.*

*She looked beautiful.*

*She was alive and she'd come back to him.*

*"I'm so glad you're back El, it hasn't been the same without you," Mike said feeling all the hopelessness he carried around melt away.*

*Suddenly El stopped swaying with him.*

*"Why didn't you save me?" El asked him sadly.*

*Mike froze in fear.*

*El didn't look like El anymore.*

*Blood started pouring out of her nose and ears.*

*"El? El what's wrong?"*

*Mike started to panic.*

*El's once smiling face became pale and gray and her body seemed to deflate until it looked like a skeleton.*

*Her pretty dress turned into rags and her eyes turned black as night.*

*"You Promised!" El screamed.*

Mike woke up with her name on his lips.

He was sweating like crazy and his heart was beating so loudly he could almost hear it.

He looked around his room and tried to calm himself down.

He almost wanted to cry.

Or scream.

*It wasn't real.*

*It was just another nightmare.*

But it was also the truth.

He promised her she would be okay and that she would have a normal life and that they would go to the Snowball together.

And it was all a lie.

No matter how much Mike wished otherwise because she was dead and she was never coming back.

*It wasn't fair.*

Mike looked at the clock next to his bed.

It was 10 in the morning.

It was also October 31st.

Meaning it was Halloween, which meant that the guys were coming over at noon.

They were going to eat junk food and watch scary movies all day. But not too scary this year because no one wanted Will to get too scared. And then later they were going to put on their costumes and go out Trick or Treating. They were probably getting too old for it but they didn't really care.

*It was going to be a good day*, Mike decided.

He would be with his friends all day and they were also going to sleep over tonight, so they were planning on staying up a long as they possibly could to play D & D.

Mike got up and went to take a shower before they got to his house.

He was used to having awful dreams but sometimes they were hard to shake.

His friends arrived at noon like they always did on Halloween. It was like a tradition.

*One that El would never be a part of*, a voice in the back of his mind said.

Mike tried his hardest to ignore it.

"Whoa, what happened to your face?" Dustin asked loudly at the sight of him.

Mike almost cursed. He had canceled their science fair meeting last night after the Troy disaster so they hadn't seen Mike's bruised face yet. Mike gave them the same lie as his mom. *Sorry, I fell down the stairs and I'm just not feeling too good.*

They had been angry at first and Mike felt guilty. However, now that they had seen his bruised face, they only seemed worried.

"You said you fell down the stairs, right?" Will asked, surprised at Mike's injuries.

"Yeah...right I did. It looks worse than it actually is," Mike explained awkwardly. He hated lying to them but he would hate having to explain that he got beat up by a bunch of mouthbreathers even more.

"Looks like you fell right on your face," Dustin said.

"Yeah, I did. I'm such a klutz."

Lucas gave Mike a stern look. Somehow Mike knew that Lucas didn't believe him but after a moment Lucas decided to let it go.

Mike sent him a thankful look and Lucas rolled his eyes.

Lucas had brought a couple of his favorite movies while Dustin brought all his favorite snacks.

Dustin had also once again invited Max to join them, which Mike completely saw as a betrayal. Thankfully, Max had told them that she was going to be busy all day but she would probably stop by in time to go trick or treating with them. Mike hoped that it wouldn't be too awful.

The guys spent all day eating junk food and watching their favorite films.

For a couple of hours, everything felt right.

Mike felt warm and happy.

Everything was normal, almost like it was before El.

Will looked happy and comfortable in his own skin. Dustin cracked stupid jokes that had them all laughing until their stomachs ached. Lucas and Mike didn't even bicker over what movie they should watch next like they usually did. Mike's mom had ordered them pizza and she even baked some of her special cookies. And for the first time in weeks, Mike's appetite returned. He pretended not to see the way his mother's eyes lit up upon seeing him act so...normal. Instead, he just thanked her and gave her a kiss on her cheek, ignoring the way it made her eyes a little watery. Nancy even came down to watch a film with them before she went back to her room to get ready for a party she was going to with Steve. Mike really did love his family and friends.

For a moment everything felt perfect in Mike's world. Well... as close to perfect without El in it. For one golden moment, Mike felt like he

could survive anything. However, once the sun started going down, the kids had to stop goofing around and they decide to put on their costumes and get ready to head out. And just in time to ruin Mike's good mood, came a knock on the door.

For one golden moment, Mike felt like he could survive anything. However, once the sun started going down, the kids had to stop goofing around and they decide to put on their costumes and get ready to head out. And just in time to ruin Mike's good mood, came a knock on the door.

Mike's mother went to open it.

It was Max of course. She wasn't wearing a costume. Just a plain old t-shirt and some jeans that were ripped at the jeans. And of course holding a bag for candy.

"Hello Max," said Karen warmly.

"Hello Mrs. Wheeler," responded Max shyly.

For some reason Max was always reserved and quiet around Mike's mother, Mike didn't understand why. She was never that polite around other adults at school.

"Oh, why aren't you wearing a costume?" asked Will once he saw her normal appearance.

"It's not really my style," Max responded.

"But that's the best thing about Halloween," Lucas said incredulously.

"No, it's not, candy is the best thing," Dustin said as if it was the obvious answer.

"True, shouldn't we get going? By the way, you guys look awesome," Max said looking at the boys' Ghostbuster jumpsuits.

Mike saw Dustin blush slightly at the compliment and he couldn't help but roll his eyes.

"Thanks," stuttered out Lucas lamely.

"Yeah we should get going," Mike interrupted before any more awkward moment could start.

They all gathered their bags and headed out.

"Be careful boys... boys and Max," Karen corrected herself. It was still so strange that they were friends with an actual girl but they were growing up so she shouldn't be so surprised. She just hoped they were far away from getting girlfriends. Karen didn't think she could handle it. Not that she had to worry about her own son. He was too heartbroken to look at other girls.

"Please don't be out too late," Karen said as she watched them walk away from her.

"We won't be!" called out Mike.

The kids went around Mike's neighborhood, going door to door and getting a good amount of candy.

Mike made sure to stay away from Max and she did the same. Dustin made sure to keep the peace.

But of course, that wouldn't last long.

By the third neighborhood, the sun had gone down completely and it was completely night. They were going to try to finish a couple more houses and head back to Mike's.

However, Max had taken a look at her old beat up watch and told them that it was time for her to head home.

"You sure, we were going to head back to Mike's," said Dustin.

For a moment Max looked embarrassed.

"Well, Dad doesn't want me out too late during Halloween. He says it's the devil's holiday," Max said rolling her eyes at the absurd notion.

"As if monsters and demons are really going to come out from hell and kill us all," Max scoffed at the ridiculousness.

Mike looked around tensely as a heavy silence surrounded the group.

She really wasn't too far off.

They had never told anyone else the truth. Mike had made the guys promise that they weren't going to mention anything about what had happened last year.

El, the Demogorgon, the Upside Down, the bad people...No, Mike didn't want to talk about it, especially with Max, who he didn't trust and everyone respected his decision if only a little begrudgingly.

Wil coughed to cover up the awkward silence and Lucas quickly jumped into action.

"I'll walk you home, you shouldn't be walking by yourself at night," Lucas said trying to sound brave and heroic.

"I'll go too, you can't be too careful nowadays," a blushing Dustin said quickly.

Mike couldn't help but roll his eyes. This was starting to get painful. All night he had to watch his friends trip over themselves trying to impress her. Giving her candy and chocolates and trying to make her laugh.

*Why couldn't they see? She was just playing them. She didn't like either of them the way they liked her,* Mike thought.

"I don't need you guys to hold my hand and take me home. I'm not a fragile little girl, I can take care of myself," Max said angrily.

Will, ever the nice guy, apologized for Dustin and Lucas.

"I'm sorry Max, they don't mean to insinuate that, they just care. Ya' know?"

Max's eyes softened.

"I'll be fine, you guys go on, I'll see at school on Monday,"

The guys said their goodbyes and she walked away from them.



Mike watched Lucas and Dustin stared after her forlorn.

Mike shook his head, he had to do something about this.

"Let's go up to those houses down the street and then go back to Mike's," Will said forcing them to walk away from Max's direction.

"Yeah, let's go before they take the good candy bars," Dustin called out as he strode to the next house.

As the guys walked away, Mike got an idea.

"I think I dropped my watch in the last house, I'll be right back. You guys go on," Mike said trying to act like he wasn't lying and he didn't have his watch under his sleeve.

Will gave him an odd look but didn't question him.

"Alright, just hurry so you can catch up to us," Will said as he walked towards Lucas and Dustin who had left them behind already.

"Sure," Mike responded.

It was a stupid idea but in Mike's head, it seemed like the only option.

He had to confront Max and get her to stop playing with his friend's feelings.

She had no right.

He quickly looked back at her direction and saw her walking away between small groups of dressed up kids and parents.

Mike quickly ran to catch up to her.

"Hey Max!" he called out when he was closer to her.

She froze and turned around in surprise.

"Mike...what do you want?" she asked.

"I... we need to talk," Mike said seriously.

"Are you going to apologize for being an asshole?" Max asked scathingly.

Mike glared at her.

"No, I just want to tell you that you need to stop playing with Dustin and Lucas's feelings. It's obvious that you don't feel the same, so just tell them before someone gets hurt," said Mike feeling braver than ever before. He would protect his friends whether it was from the Demogorgon or a rude, inconsiderate girl.

For a moment Max's face went blank and Mike thought that she was for sure going to punch him in the face.

"This is absolutely none of your business Mike!" Max shouted at him after a moment of tense silence.

"They are my best friends! Of course, it's my business! You're just playing with their feelings and you're going to end up breaking their hearts!" Mike shouted back.

"That's not true," Max shouted back, her face going a red as her hair.

"Yes it is unless you let them know that you don't have feelings for them," Mike said trying not to scream because people were starting to stare at them now.

"I can't," Max said, her voice uneven and tears gathering in her eyes.

"Why not?" Mike asked.

"You won't get it," Max responded.

Mike was awfully confused, it seemed so simple to him.

"Get what? You just have to be honest with them,"

"I just...I don't want them to stop being friends with me," Max said.

"That ridiculous. Why would they stop being friends with you?"

Max looked frustrated and sad.

"You don't get it, I don't have anyone else that gives a damn about me and if I tell them the truth they'll get mad at me and then they'll just leave me like everyone else I've ever cared about," Max said angrily but Mike soon realized that Max wasn't angry.

She was just scared.

"Max that's not true. Dustin and Lucas aren't jerks, they'll understand," Mike said trying to reassure her.

Max started crying and Mike realized that he had been the biggest jerk of all.

"Do you have any idea how lucky you are to have friends that actually care about you? To have a mother that would do anything to make you smile?" Max asks bitterly, but under her biting words, Mike can almost feel her pain.

Mike didn't really know much about Max's home life. He just knew that she only had a brother and a father. And that she didn't get along with either of them. He had never bothered to learn more about her, he didn't bother to ever truly care.

*What's wrong with me?*

*I used to be a good person.*

Mike knows that once upon a time, he would have cared about Max like he cared about the rest of his friends.

*When did he grow so damn cold?*

Mike felt like the shittiest person in the world.

Max was still crying, although she tried to wipe her tears away and hide it.

"Max, I am so sorry that I've been so horrible to you. But I promise that no matter what we won't ever leave you," he said trying to make things right.

He can't believe he made someone like Max cry. It seems impossible,

but she's only human so Mike shouldn't be so surprised.

Max crossed her arms and stared at him through slitted eyes.

"Do you truly mean that?" Max asked seriously.

"Yes, of course, I do," Mike said quickly

"Alright, then you can start by telling me the truth,"

Mike froze.

"What do you mean?" he asked trying to keep his face blank.

"Who's the other girl that Troy was talking about? And why won't you guys talk about what happened to Will in front of me? I'm not an idiot, I know you guys hide things from me all the time. And if you truly want to make this friendship work then you have to learn to trust me," Max said carefully.

Mike should have said something. Anything but he felt like his brain had shut down.

"You lost someone too? Didn't you?" Max said after a moment of silence.

Mike felt a tightening in his chest. He couldn't get the words out of his mouth. He felt so utterly weak. All he had to do was tell her the truth. But the truth hurt so much. The truth scared the hell out of him. The truth broke his heart into a million pieces every day.

*Once upon a time, we found a girl. Or maybe she found us... But now she's dead.*

Max shook her head. More tears falling from her eyes as she realized that she would never truly be a part of their group.

She turned away from him.

"Just leave me the hell alone Mike," Max said quietly and then she ran as far away as she could from him.

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**This chapter is kinda of a slow one, next chapter will have more action and maybe reveals...**

**Also, leave comments on your thoughts about a mileven reunion. I feel like I have so many ideas for it that it's kinda hard to write something down.**

## 5. Chapter 5

**Warning: There will be some violence towards Max in this chapter but nothing too horrible and also warning for drunk/reckless driving. I don't think it's too horrible but here's a warning if you would like to skip it or be aware. Also warning for swearing. I really didn't mean to make this story so dark. Oops.**

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### Chapter 5

Max POV:

Max knew that eventually, Mike would blow up.

It was easy to see that something was eating him up inside. That something was wrong and not just with him but with everyone else too. Max hoped that with time, her friends would open up to her. That they would accept her as one of their own. And she would finally stop feeling so alone.

Max had high hopes when she moved to this town. She was going to put the past behind her. She was going to stop crying and feeling sorry for herself. Just because her own mother, who she loved the most in the world, left her without a word didn't mean that she was going to spend the rest of her life miserable and alone.

No, Max refused to be pathetic.

So when her father made her and Billy pack up and leave their home in California, Max accepted. She was tired of seeing her family house without her mother in it. She was sick of her friends that always pretended they were too cool to care about anything. She needed a new start, and Billy didn't give a shit anyway. He never did.

So off they went to Hawkins.

They bought a small and mostly crappy house but to Max, it was enough. Her mother's ghost didn't haunt her here as much. Then

when she became friend with Dustin, who immediately introduced her to the rest of the boys, she finally started feeling like she might actually be happy one day. She wanted so badly to be a part of their group, the way they cared about each other made her envious.

She knew her father cared about her but he seemed too broken to truly love anyone. And Billy...he never gave a shit.

So once she became friends with the boys she finally started feeling like she belonged somewhere. It was everything she ever needed or wanted.

But once she realized that Lucas and Dustin had a crush on her she knew that she couldn't just tell them off. She refused to hurt them and tell them that she didn't feel the same way.

She knew how people worked.

Once you hurt them, they get angry, and sometimes that anger turns into hate.

She cared about both of them and she wanted to be their friend. So she let them crush on her and hoped that one day it would fade away and she wouldn't have to talk to them about it and they wouldn't hate her for turning them away. And she would be a part of their group and she would be happy.

But that wasn't going to happen.

Because of Mike... he never let her in, no matter how much she tried or how long she waited, and without Mike's acceptance Dustin, Lucas, and Will could never truly accept her.

*It was a silly dream*, Max thought to herself as she walked back home on that Halloween night.

She had stopped crying a block ago, and now she just felt cold and numb.

It was stupid of her to think that anyone could care about her when even her own mother couldn't love her.

For the millionth time, Max thought about the real questions that always ran through her mind.

*What is so wrong with me that makes everybody leave?*

*I must be a horrible person, a bad daughter. That's why mom left.*

A loud honk snapped Max out of her dark thoughts.

She turned and saw a black car rolling down the street towards her.

It was her brother's car.

The only thing that Billy probably loves.

Once it reached her, the car stopped and its windows rolled down.

Her brother stared at her with red eyes and a cigarette hanging from his lips.

"Get in the car," Billy commanded.

Normally if it was any other time, she would say no and probably give him the middle finger but she felt too drained to fight with him tonight.

"Are you heading home?" she asked him doubtfully.

"Yes, now get in or I'm leaving you and locking the front door when you get to the house," Billy said spitefully.

Max rolled her eyes but she walked towards the passenger's door and got in.

Once she was finally inside she realized why he was in an especially foul mood.

There was a half-empty bottle of whiskey on the floor of her seat and the stench of alcohol underneath the already present stench of cigarette smoke. Max hated the smell of it.

She felt an uncomfortable twinge in her stomach.



Dealing with Billy while he was normal was a challenge, but dealing with him while he was drunk was impossible.

"Are you drunk? You know you shouldn't be driving," Max said cautiously trying not to upset him.

"I'm the best driver in the world," Billy said cockily.

Max rolled her eyes, she knew that he actually believed that. He had gotten in trouble multiples times for racing. Sometimes Max though he was addicted to it. It was probably another reason why Dad had decided to move them to a smaller town. Less trouble for him to go looking for.

"Where were you tonight?" Billy asked and Max noticed the tiny bit of slurring to his voice

"Were you out with those boys again? What have I told you about them," Billy warned.

Billy always soured at seeing her happy. Something that Max could never understand. And ever since she became friendly with the boys, Billy would always make stabs at her, telling her it wasn't proper that she was hanging out with so many boys. Calling her names and warning her that they were just going to think she was dirty and easy. Trying to make her stay away from them. It angered Max and often led to shouting matches between them, but Max never let him dictate what she was allowed to do.

"Dad said it was alright," Max told him stonily.

Her father had told her she could go only if she cleaned the whole house which she had begrudgingly spent all day doing while Billy was out doing whatever the hell he wanted.

Billy snorted.

The car swerved a little and Max started to feel a little afraid.

*How much did he have to drink?*

"Well, what does Dad know anyways? He's probably passed out on

the couch right now," he said bitterly.

Max knew he was probably right but she tried to ignore him.

They were near their house now.

She would soon be locked in her room and eating a cold and crappy dinner that Dad had prepared if he even remembered to.

She didn't have to be scared to be in this car with him for long.

However, Billy ended up driving right by their house without stopping.

Instead, he sped up a little.

Max was fully panicked.

"What are you doing? You missed our house!" she yelled at him.

Billy laughed at her terrified voice and he ended up speeding up even more.

"Let's have some fun, the nights still young," Billy said bitterly.

He stepped on the gas and they were soon racing down the street moving past parked cars and empty houses.

Max thought about Mike's sister and Will's brother.

Why couldn't she have a sibling like that?

She always envied the way that they cared for Mike and Will. The way they always made sure they were safe and happy. Even though Max could tell that Mike and Will struggled every day. But still, their siblings were always there for them.

And Billy just made her life as miserable as he could.

"This isn't funny stop the car right now!" She screamed her voice cracking as she felt tears gather in her eyes.

She didn't want to die tonight.

"I'm serious, stop right now. I want to get out," Max tried to say in a stern voice.

Billy laughed at her once more. His eyes looked cold and empty.

Max was terrified.

She started crying as Billy took a sharp turn and the car wobbled unstably.

"Please! Stop right now before you kill us!" Max screamed at him.

To Max's surprise, Billy actually hit the brakes.

Once the car stopped, Max sat there in shock.

*What is wrong with him? What is wrong with my brother? Why does he hate me?*

She turned towards him so that she could scream at him some more. That was the stupidest most dangerous thing he had done to her.

*How dare he?*

He was her brother, he was supposed to protect her not get her almost killed.

But before she could open her mouth he had gotten out of the car, his body tense.

He marched towards her side door and wrenched it open.

His eyes were still cold but they now held anger. No, it was

No, it was pure rage.

"Billy...what are you doing?" Max asked in complete terror of his appearance.

He reached towards her and she tried to get away from him.

But he grabbed a hold of her arm and yanked her out of the car with all his might.

Max cried as he threw her towards the ground.

She landed hard on her side.

Her breath knocked out of her lungs and a throbbing pain coming from her forearm where he had grabbed her too tightly.

"Well, you wanted to get out, little sis," Billy taunted her as she tried to sit up.

"You are such an asshole! What's wrong with you?" Max cried out.

"You're such a baby, I was under control and if I wanted to kill you you'd be dead already," Billy said coldly.

Max was horrified.

*Would he actually kill her?*

"There is something fucked up in your head. You're the reason why mom left!" Max yelled at him.

The moment those words left her mouth, she knew she had screwed up.

She didn't talk about mom around him ever. Not unless she wanted to truly piss him off.

"What the fuck did you just say to me?" Billy said his voice sounding like a deadly threat.

He walked closer towards her. His hands clenched tightly and shaking slightly in anger.

"You are just like your Mother aren't you," he said in disgust.

Max saw him raise his arm.

*Oh God*, he was actually going to hit her.

Max sat frozen in the pavement. Too scared to move a muscle. Too scared to try and run.

All she could do was close her eyes in fear and turn away.

However, she never felt a thing.

Instead, she heard Billy screaming.

She opened her eyes and to her disbelief, she saw Billy flying through the air. No, he wasn't flying. It looked like he was being thrown by an invisible force. His eyes were confused, as he was somehow knocked across the street.

He landed with a heavy thud and didn't get up.

Silence surrounded Max, all she could hear was her panicked breathing.

*What the hell just happened?*

"Are you okay?" a quiet voice said behind her.

A girl's voice.

Max gave a loud yelp and clutched her chest feeling herself almost have a heart attack.

She quickly got up and turned behind her looking for the source.

There stood a girl. A thin girl, probably her own age. She had wavy, short brown hair and brown eyes.

She was wearing a dark and large hoodie over her small frame that made her porcelain complexion stand out.

She was also carrying a backpack.

"Who are you? Did you..." Max shook her head, it couldn't be possible but her eyes didn't deceive her,

"Did you do that?" Max asked amazed.

The girl looked frightened but she didn't back away as Max walked towards her.

"My name is El...and I can explain."

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**Sorry, this chapter is shorter. Please leave a review, I have a feeling next chapter will be difficult to write and it will take a long time to write so I'll need some support lol**